

On the Trail

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF EL DORADO NATURE CENTER FRIENDS & VOLUNTEERS

From the Director . . .

Traditionally fall at the Nature Center has been a time to regroup after a busy summer, a time to review our accomplishments, analyze our programs and plan for the coming year. I've always felt a little like the squirrels gathering the coast live oaks acorns along the trail, as I cache ideas for spring and summer. This year, the fall reflection time seems to have evaporated like our early September rain. Though the leaves on the trees are orange, yellow and red and the argiope spiders continue to spin their webs across the trail, our time to reach out in new directions and create a broader array of offerings to enhance ecological consciousness and education about sustainability seems illusive. Come to think of it, it may just be that the flow continues – there is no respite – just a continuation of the fine work staff and volunteers take part in every day.

Within that flow, fall does herald the time to plant in Southern California. The fire of August 19th and the ensuing cleanup work along the one and two mile trails opened up two areas that will be replanted by Habitat Stewards volunteers and Nature Center staff. The trimming of trees on the island will afford us the opportunity to do some new planting in the demonstration garden and around the building. The generous gift of \$1000 from Alex and Mia Lipski in honor of all the Nature Center volunteers will

finance those new plantings.

In other restoration news, the money allocated for our stream renovation will continue to earn interest for another year, as permitting issues halted our fall construction date. We'll have to wait another year for our revitalized stream and hope that more money for habitat enhancement work is garnered by the department's grant writers in the meantime.

Among this fall's special events was the

ever popular Coastal Cleanup Day when more than 1800 people helped clean our wetlands and beaches. The Fall Reptile Show, the Annual Native Plant Sale, Andy Goldsworthy Day, the Colorado Lagoon Bird Festival, the Toorovetaam Sand Sculpture event with Tongva Leader Cindi Alvitre and the Alternative Giving Festival all followed in quick succession. The countless hours of organizing each of these fun-filled educational offerings require are

overshadowed by the myriad tours, classes, and impromptu programs that staff provides at the Nature Center and the Colorado Lagoon each month.

Thinking about all this activity, I know why I long for that gathering and hibernating time. We don't ever stop, just like the warblers working the sycamore above me for a tasty morsel. They are here for the winter, resting, eating and planning for the coming spring, just as we are.

Join us. Come for a visit, a quiet moment lakeside or a vigorous walk on the trail. Come share a meal or the joy of a job well done. Share the spirit of giving back to the earth and to each other for all of creation. Sustain your spirit as we all work to sustain the health of our earth. Celebrate yourself, your friends and co-workers and this glorious place.

– Mary Blackburn



Art created with natural materials on Andy Goldsworthy Day.

Cleaning the Beach One Day at a Time

More than 1800 friends and neighbors joined together in Long Beach on September 15th for California Coastal Cleanup Day. This annual gathering of volunteers that takes place throughout the state was marked as a success this year, with Long Beach volunteers retrieving more than 6400 pounds of debris from seven sites. More than 900 pounds of that trash was recyclable.

"It's so great to see everyone come together to help," said Meaghan O'Neill the Nature Center's event coordinator, "but the bigger challenge is educating people not to litter in the first place by picking up debris in our community and in our front yards throughout the year. Those simple steps will keep trash from ending up on the beaches."

Long Beach is California's fifth largest city, and has an enormous problem with what is called non-point source pollution – trash that cannot be attributed to a single source, such as a factory. Much of the



Adults and children of all sizes attended the 23rd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day on September 15.

debris that is deposited on the Long Beach shoreline falls into this category and is carried from throughout the county down the San Gabriel and Los Angeles rivers. For instance, as a result of the early September rain, 175,000 pounds of garbage was brought to Long Beach from cities upstream by the L.A. River alone. Not only is the trash unsightly, it creates economic hardship for those living and working near

the beach, is a public health problem and is a threat to shore and ocean animals.

If you would like to do more to keep our beaches clean and healthy, you can participate in the Nature Center's year-round beach and wetland cleanup programs – Adopt-a-Beach and Adopt-a-Wetland. Contact Meaghan at the Nature Center for an application.

Habitat Stewards – Planning for the Future

Eight new volunteers will join our dynamic Habitat Stewards team this fall after completing five training sessions and designing a planting plan. After class lessons on the natural history and biology of the region, plant identification, irrigation, weed management and planting techniques, the new volunteers, along with existing volunteer mentors, worked together to create a planting plan for the recently burned area of the Center.

"We have a diligent team of existing volunteers who are working with the trainees on what plants will be best for the area," says Donnie Haigh, Habitat Stewards coordinator. "This will be a great start to their education in habitat restoration, as well as an exciting achievement for our regulars."

Choosing plants for an area requires understanding the light, water, spacing and

other needs of the various species to be utilized, as well as knowledge of the specific members of a particular plant community. There is creativity involved as well, such as selecting plants for screening, color, fra-



Part of the burned area of the trail right after the fire on August 19th.

grance and value to wildlife.

The new planting plan will come to life at the burned area, located off the one-mile trail near the eastern perimeter fence, in December. The area was cleared by our experienced Habitat Stewards and continues to be prepared and the weeds managed until the plants are put in place.

Please join us in welcoming our new Habitat Stewards: **Linda Diaz, Lynne Horn, Nancy Jensen, Diane Reynolds, Lee Warren, William Whittman, Karen Thompson, Neil Uelmann.** And a big thanks to **Pamela Angeles, Margaret Brandt, Linda Bryan-Thompson, Tommy Fowler, Nancy Hagthorp, Elena Holcomb, Caroline Klund, Kerry Martin, Suzanne McMichael, and Jo Ann Smith** for their excellent work and commitment.

Trail Stewards – New Name, New Vision

As an extension of the volunteer visioning meetings held earlier this year, our trail volunteer group met after a summer hiatus to discuss the future of their program. At the meeting in August, the group decided to change the name from Trail Patrol to Trail Stewards, to better reflect the developing vision of having volunteers on the trail not only to help with safety but also to educate and nurture discovery.

September's meeting brought us Lieutenant Joe Stilnovich, head of the Park Ranger Program, who discussed the policy of CPR: courtesy, politeness, respect. Lieutenant Joe explained that using these tenants during interaction on the trail will help volunteers and staff communicate more effectively Nature Center policies and the reasons underlying them. He also discussed procedures for dealing safely with conflict on the trail.

In addition to trail work, volunteers have pledged to spend some of their time greeting visitors at the front gate. This will help Trail Stewards create a rapport with visitors and, according to Lieutenant Joe, it will also establish a psychological presence that can help minimize problems. It's also a great opportunity to inform folks of the rules and sights they might look for on the trail.

"People really loved us greeting them, handing out maps and letting them know what to look for," said Trail Steward Lee Warren after being a greeter on a Sunday



Introducing the Trail Stewards

(L to R) – Back row: Steve Livoijja, Mike Powell, Lee Warren, Steve McCord, Frances Tomich, and Craig Matheny. Middle row: Al Kimura, Ed Brezezinski, Dee Barnard, Diana Chang, Linda Diaz, Stephanie Rodriguez, Gloria Potocki, and Steve Witt. Front row: Dorothy Geisler, Diane Fuller, Judy Blatchford, Jeremy Blatchford, and Paul Kiley.

afternoon. "So many people said this was their first time here, and we were able to remind several people of rules they weren't aware they were breaking before they entered."

The next in the series of Trail Steward monthly meetings of training and enrichment is November 17. Also mark your calendar in '08 for January 12 for the next

Trail Stewards meeting. Anyone interested in becoming a Trail Steward can sign up for the next training session, February 2, 9 and 16, 2008.

Many thanks to the Trail Steward volunteers for their on-going commitment to the Nature Center and its goal of nurturing a desire to care for the earth among all who visit.

Many thanks to **Valero Oil Company** for donating proceeds from their employee *No Name Golf Tournament*. This generous gift of \$3500 is an important contribution to El Dorado Nature Center's efforts to restore wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for children and adults in the community to learn the wonders of nature and humanity's role in its stewardship. We honor Valero Oil for its commitment to helping the earth and the future of those living on it.

Don't forget ***Friends of El Dorado Nature Center*** in this season of giving. Renew your membership today or give a donation to the *Friends* in honor of a loved one. Enclosed you'll find a *Friends* envelope so you can make your gift today.

Migrating Birds

— A Welcome Sight on the Landscape

Fall is here and as winter approaches, we as nature lovers can look forward to that annual rite of changing seasons: migration. Over the coming few months the natural landscape will include the presence of birds who may only make a brief appearance as they travel from the northern regions seeking food in warmer climates. Some of these feathery friends will only pass through our area, while others will stay until the beginning of spring.

The beauty and grace of these part-time residents is a highlight of winter wildlife watching. As much of the rest of nature lies dormant for the winter, migratory birds bring color and activity to the landscape. You can look for Townsend's, Wilson's and Yellow Warblers, Cedar Waxwings and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers who spend the winter

with us in the trees. On the south lake, keep an eye out for American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck and Green-winged Teal, just to name a few.

In order to get here, birds use sophisticated strategies. They often must navigate over hundreds or thousands miles from

their summer homes. Scientists have discovered that not only do birds use topography such as rivers, coastlines and mountains to get where they're going, but they also use smell, the movement of the sun and monitoring of the earth's magnetic field.

Fuel efficiency is key to successful migration. Some of the ways they get the most mileage out of the last seed or rodent are going slow and steady, soaring, flapping and gliding, and bounding (flapping with a close-winged glide). These techniques help save energy and reduce drag, depending on body structure and wing shape.

This annual appearance is a wonderful reminder of why having open space in the midst of an urban environment is important. So, get out your binoculars and bird ID book and enjoy the show!



A Northern Pintail is one of the many migrating waterfowl we can hope to see at the Nature Center south lake this winter.

The Tide of Learning Continues at Colorado Lagoon

This fall will be an exciting time with lots of activity going on at the Colorado Lagoon Wetland and Marine Science Education Center. The middle and high school programs that began in January 2006, will continue and expand. For the second year, Roger's Middle School students will study the lagoon with a focus on solving the mystery of environmental pollution. Through water quality testing, visual assessments and mapping, students will learn the causes and effects of pollution and come up with solutions to the problems they detect.

Poly High School's Pacific Rim Academy will also be returning to the

Lagoon this year. They will strive to learn the role of wetlands in the health of marine ecosystems. To accomplish this, they will study an introduction to the watershed and their place in it, map the area, conduct water quality tests and take a bird census.

For the first time, both Lakewood and Wilson High Schools will use the Lagoon as a base for science study this year. Students from Lakewood High will be exploring science fair project topics and will use the Lagoon as a focus for developing and testing hypotheses, gathering data and formulating conclusions. Wilson High students will have the chance to study marine biology in their own backyard.

Many thanks to teachers Stephanie Bower at Lakewood High School, Bill Craychee at Rogers Middle School, Ken Hamilton at Wilson High School and Erica Kelly at Poly High School.

In addition to the formal learning taking place at the Lagoon, a public education event is scheduled for Saturday, November 17th. The Nature Center will host a celebration of birds through art. Join artists for a closer look at the myriad birds that winter in the tiny backwater of the San Gabriel estuary. You'll discover the beauty, grace and diversity of your wintertime avian neighbors. It's a day of fun and learning for the whole family. See you there!

An Enriching Evening with Our Volunteers

Our ongoing volunteer enrichment series continued in September with South Bay Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, who addressed our volunteers and staff on raptor biology and behavior.

In order to help volunteers understand urban wildlife better, Christina Jones began with a slide show highlighting many of the common raptors found in our area. She focused on Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Coopers Hawks and Owls.

Christina also helped volunteers understand some of the visual differences in identifying the birds as well as facts about them. For instance, it is most common in birds of prey for the female to be larger than the male. She also shared that Coopers Hawks are often mistaken for the Peregrin Falcon because of similarities in size and coloring, but that Peregrins are generally a rare sighting in an urban environment since they are an endangered species. We were all fascinated to learn

that Barn owls are the only bird who can hunt in total darkness, whereas Great-horned owls hunt at dawn or dusk, and burrowing owls hunt during the day. Other interesting facts shared were that Barn owls are found all over the world, except



South Bay Wildlife Rehab volunteer Christina Jones during her presentation on birds of prey. She is joined by Miss Luna, a barn owl rescued as a baby. Miss Luna is unable to fly properly because of tissue damage to her knee.

in Antarctica and they have no sense of smell, but use primarily their hearing to pin-point the location of prey.

The highlight of the evening came when six birds from the rehab center who had been saved but would not survive if released back into the wild were brought out. We all watched as the wide-eyed Great-Horned owl spread its massive wings and demonstrated the famous 270 degree owl head turn. We giggled as the pair of merlins screeched periodically, interrupting the talk and upstaging the presenter. And, we gasped as Christina talked about the sweet looking little screech owl who had experienced head trauma when his nesting tree was cut down.

The presentation helped us all understand raptor behavior better. This knowledge will help us identify the different birds, understand how urbanization is affecting populations, and effectively responding to help an injured bird.

Hello & Goodbyes

As you may know, the Nature Center has had a few staff changes recently. Over the summer, Christopher Ward, who coordinated the annual Coastal Cleanup and Adopt-a-Beach programs, accepted a position with the Union as a business development representative. Louise Clements who left us in August, gave birth to a beautiful baby boy on September 1. Aiden Monzon Clements was 20 inches and 8 pounds, 6 ounces at birth. Louise, her husband Todd, and their family are thrilled and enjoying this wonderful new member of their clan. Esther Kim, who has been so instrumental in developing programming at the Colorado Lagoon Wetland and Marine Education and Science Center also left the Nature Center in August to travel and move to northern California to scout graduate

schools. We greatly miss these wonderful folks who added so much to our lives.



L to R: New staffers Debra Wallin and Anne Taormina.

As we say good-bye to old friends and wish them all good things in the future, join us in welcoming two new naturalists to the Nature Center. Anne Taormina joins us after having graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. Anne grew up in Downey and is glad to be part of the Southern California community again, "I'm really looking forward to sharing my ideas at the Nature Center," Anne says. Our other new naturalist, Deborah Wallin comes to us with a background in photography and teaching, including leading nature walks at Bolsa Chica. She says, "I love being here – I love the spirit of the Nature Center. The idea of respect for the whole of creation resonates deeply with me and I want to share the joy of nature with visitors."

Native Plants

The beauty that helps life thrive

Patrons of our native plant sale on October 27 were among the growing number of people enthusiastic about converting their gardens and yards to a more sustainable environment. Hundreds of drought tolerant shrubs, bulbs, trees and ground cover were scooped up by more than 800 attendees. Sponsored by Friends of El Dorado Nature Center and Partners of Parks, the sale featured ceanothus, toyon, coast sunflower, buckwheat, blue-eyed grass, a variety of sages, willows, sycamore trees and many more.

Those who attended recognized that native plants not only save on water, but also are beautiful and attract butterflies and birds. Because native insects and birds have co-evolved with the plants in their

region, they are naturally attracted to those indigenous plants for food, nesting materials and shelter. Nourishing a native habitat enables species lower on the food



chain to flourish, thus strengthening the entire web of life.

“We wanted a native plant garden in our home to recreate the experience we have when hiking in wild places” says Linda Bryan-Thompson, a Habitat Stewards volunteer and native plant gardener. “We now have beautiful, fragrant flowers and plants that attract tons of wildlife like humming birds and finches. It’s like having my own nature center in the backyard.”

If you missed the plant sale, it’s not too late to get started planting your own native garden. Just visit Tree of Life Nursery in San Juan Capistrano. For directions and hours call 949-728-0685 or visit them on the web at www.treeoflifenursery.com.



The Antidote for the Frenzy of the Holidays



It is mid-September and as I cruise the aisles of my local discount store I am stopped in my tracks by a small display I see. Christmas wreaths... I stop for a quick moment, is it November already? Thanksgiving used to be the traditional start of the holiday gift-buying season, but now it has been moved up to September. The commercialism of the holiday season now takes up almost a third of the year!

Frustrated by this focus on consumerism, I have turned to alternative giving. What I do is a method of gift giving where a donation is made in a friend’s name to a charitable organization. Charities that promote this type of giving usually provide me a card or certificate as a symbol of the gift, which describes the donation and how it will be used.

The fun part is to match the donations to the interests of those on my list. Heifer International offers a “knitting basket” that

would appeal to my grandmother Lorna who crochets baby blankets for friends and relatives. It provides a gift of four wool-producing llamas or sheep to a community in South America. A donation to Michoacan Reforestation Fund will help restore areas in Mexico where Monarch butterflies overwinter – a perfect gift for folks such as our resident lepidopterist, Richard James. Through the Seva Foundation, I can even provide the gift of sight by sponsoring a simple 15-minute surgery to someone blinded by cataracts.

For those cuddly nature lovers on my list, I can give the gift of an animal at the Nature Center. Through the Center’s adopt-an-animal program, every time my daughter Brittney comes to the Center and sees a turtle in the pond or hawk soaring overhead, she will know that she is helping wildlife have a place to find food and raise their babies.

A word of caution to those interested in charitable giving – unscrupulous organizations have been known to take advantage of the generosity of others over the holidays. Avoid scams and bogus charities by checking out the legitimacy of your chosen organization at a website like www.charitynavigator.org. The site provides independent evaluations of a wide variety of charities and shows which organizations are most financially stable and work most efficiently.

Learn more about how you can make alternative giving part of your world this year by visiting the Nature Center during November and December to see the displays on both local and international groups working to help the earth and the people who live on it. Choose a gift with real heart this holiday season. For more information and ideas, you might also like to check out www.alternativegiving.org.



El Dorado Nature Center

Thank you to all of our new Friends who have joined since August 2007.

*Your generous contributions help to make El Dorado Nature Center
a place for education and recreation like no other!*

Valero Oil Company employee No Name Golf Tournament \$3500 Donation

SUN

Alexander & Mia Lipski

RED EARED SLIDERS

Mike Beckage
Margaret Brandt
Denise Fifer
Marcia Goodman
Elena Holcomb
Marilyn James
Caroline Klund
Amelia Sue Moore
Cathy Moore
Toni Ortiz
Art Radin
Eric Scheidker
Ron Sievers
Jo Ann Smith
Lisa West Noble
Berry & Audrey Yolken

BUTTERFLY

Pamela Anderson
Jill Brennan
Debra Carlson
Lawrence Cubanski
Rita Edwards
Dorothy Geisler
Molly Isenberg
Steven Liivoja
Jeanne Lindsay
Elwood (Skip) & Donna Moyer
Patricia Reed
Kathleen Robinson
Jennifer Van Der Fluit
Bernice Van Steenberg
Richard & Linda Warner
Judy Wolfe

ACORN

Annette Alender
Pamela Angeles
Wright & Marian Atwood
Elizabeth Bolotin
Becky Bosdet
Cynthia Clark
Gloria Culpepper
Ross Dart
Maureen Elstran
Susan Ettinger
Denise Fifer
Pat Garrow
Billie Glozer
Bettsy Greenstein
Marc Gutfeld
Donnie Haigh
Eleanor Harder
Luisa Herandez
Lynne Horne
Leslie & John Hunsaker
Barbara Iwanaga
Padmini Iyer
Teresa & Peter Jordan
Eugene Klein
Karen Kvster
Robert Lamond
Joan Laszlo
Isobel Leventhal
Lynne Lockwald
Patrick Lucey
Kerry Martin
Frederic Masback
Darwin & Norma Mayfield
Betty McCown

Mary Musick-Stebbins
Tobi Neer
Meaghan O'Neill
Mara Perez
Pugh Family
Pam Rogers
Deidra Sanard
Walt & Judy Schenkel
Barbara Sentovich
John Sinclair
Helen Thaler
Jim & Mary Truitt
Richard Vieville
Nancy Watts
Ronald & Janee West
Leah Young
Kathleen Zundell

IN HONOR OF GARY HUBBLING

Ronald Bevins
Gracia Gilham
Elaine Tranbarger

IN HONOR OF VOLUNTEERS

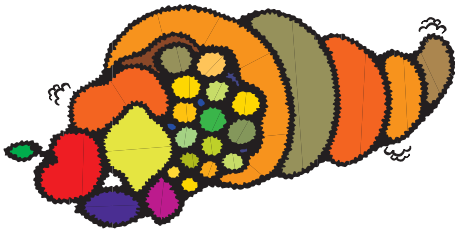
Alexander & Mia Lipski

Support the habitat and the excellent educational programs you love by renewing your membership in **Friends of El Dorado Nature Center** today. Your support is essential. Make a difference in your community by joining today! For more information (562) 570-4935.

FESTIVE FEAST

It's time once again for us to say "Thank You" to all our volunteers and *Friends of El Dorado Nature Center*. Let us show you just how much we appreciate you. Please come to our Holiday Volunteer Potluck on Tuesday, December 4 at 6 p.m.

You'll see familiar faces and meet new friends, enjoy delicious food and have lots of fun! Please bring your own place setting and a dish to share with five people. See you there!



Mark Your Calendar

November 17

- **Telebration**
- **Colorado Lagoon Migratory Bird Festival**
- **Toroovetaam Living Sculpture at Granada Beach**

December 4

- **Holiday Volunteer Potluck**

December 21

- **Call Back the Sun Campfire**

November 21- December 31

- **Alternative Gift Fair**

December 31

- **New Year's Eve Walk**

